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SCENES IN A SWISS VILLAGE.

A SLIGHT circumstance is sufficient to create a sensation in an Alpine village—or, indeed, in any village, for the matter of that; and the incident which the artist has chosen is one common to almost every town and hamlet in Europe. The monkey, like a finished gentleman, has made the “grand tour,” and, like the old woman in the nursery tale, has “music wherever he goes.” No sooner does he make his appearance in the outskirts of the village, than out troop the neighbours

“whole” of the picture are brought together: the sun-browned Italian boy grinds out the tunes from his hurdy-gurdy with the same thoughtful, gentle, melancholy face in the bye-places of merrie England as before the snow-cold doorways of rude Russian boors; the quiet, almost classic, features of the little lad whose office it is to be at once the monkey’s teacher and bearer, are as well known all over France, and Germany, and central Europe, as in the mountain hamlet near the lake



THE MONKEY. FROM A SKETCH BY KARL GIRARDET.

—for in primitive places all men are neighbours—to bid him welcome. In the instance before us, M. Girardet has chosen naturally enough, to sketch what he has certainly himself seen; but the incidents of the picture are so life-like and natural, that, but for one or two little peculiarities of architecture and costume, it might be taken for a representation of one of our own village scenes in any State in the Union.

How admirable the various “parts” that go to make a

of Como where he was born—perhaps a great deal better; and then as to Jocko, the principal actor, and certainly the best fed and cared-for of the travelling group, who does not recognise in him the type of the whole performing tribe of monkeys “who have seen the world?” Is there not the very same dusky red jacket, buttoned behind to prevent its wearer from tearing it open on wrong occasions? the same old look of cunning which is a libel and a satire on the “human face divine?” the same jumping, starting, frightening, thievish,

mischievous monkeyism, which seems inseparable from the character of the educated animal?

These, the principal figures in the picture, are, of course, the sole attraction in the village scene the picture represents.

tremblingly handing a nut to Monsieur Jocko? or what more life-like than the thoughtful expression of the coatless rustic in the porch? or the half-laughing, half-wondering look of the old woman peering over his shoulder, as if but that instant



THE MAN OF SNOW. FROM A SKETCH BY KARL GIRARDET.

But in this design, as in many others, the adjuncts interest the spectator more nearly and entirely than the prominent actors. What can be more natural and home-like than that father and that young mother with the little child, who is

interrupted from her domestic duties? In the background are seen the villagers—young men and maidens—eager to catch a glimpse of the interesting stranger; and their curiosity and excitement is well contrasted with the fright of the child in

front, who, though his back is towards us, is, we may be certain, bawling lustily to be taken home by his too good-natured grandmother,—and yet this little fellow, who is so scared at sight of a shabby-looking monkey, will drive a dozen cows to the pasture with the most perfect self-possession, and grow up into a sturdy tiller of the soil; or, haply, become another William Tell or Winkelried.

Dogs bark, and little children crowd forward to greet monsieur the monkey who has seen the world; and in the midst the poor mendicants stand unconcerned, and ring out their tinkling bird-like music to the intense delight of the assemblage. It is no uncommon thing to meet with lads in the great highways of Europe—London, and Paris, and Berlin, and Brussels—who accompany the notes of their barrel organs with notes of their own, and follow every involution of the air with the unerring fidelity of a well-taught bullfinch; and this, too, not with a coarse loud whistle, but with a sweetly modulated piping which accords so well with the instrument as to please rather than offend the ear. It is calculated that there are at the present moment not fewer than four thousand lads employed in carrying about and playing various descriptions of hand organs. The most of them come from the villages in Italian Switzerland—poor, simple children of the mountains—whence they are carried by their masters to the various cities of Europe. Every summer England is invaded by an army of swarthy, innocent-looking foreigners, who, after gathering their harvest of copper—money given for the most part as a free-will offering of pity, rather than as payment for their music—betake themselves home again to their quiet little cottages, rich in the possession of something more than a labourer's monthly wage. Poor fellows!

To return for an instant to the picture. As a whole it cannot but be considered as a striking and vivid representation of a village incident common to almost every country in Europe or America. The flower-covered chalet in the foreground, the picturesque houses and the modest church-steeple behind, and the grand old hills which rise above all, give to it an air at once homely, artistic, and human.

The scene changes: winter has come—dark, cold, cheerless winter; but not so dark and cheerless as we may at first suppose. The snow will soon be here, and the sharp, brisk frost, bringing with them new pleasures and delights.

Here it comes in thick leaden clouds, making the earth seem dark; here it comes in large white flakes, like feathers, feathers plucked from aerial geese by an aerial old woman. Softly falling on the hard ground—thicker, faster—faster, thicker—till all the ground is covered, and the roofs and gables, and the naked branches of the trees, and every outside window-ledge, and every wall-top, and every spot whereon the flakes can lodge, is white, as white as snow can make it. Still falling faster, faster, thicker, thicker, all night long, and out we look upon the gloomy scene—so black above, so white below,—the earth wrapped in a winding sheet, and not a footprint on the snow.

And then the morning comes, so sharp, so cold, and yet so pleasant, and busy people stamp their feet upon the ground to keep them warm, and boys begin to slide upon the frozen ground, or are off and away to the streamlet or the pond, to see whether it be possible as yet to skate. Then hey for snow-balls! Boys are not afraid of cold, and cough, and aching limbs to-morrow; they set to work with a will, and make such wondrous balls, that by rolling them over and over and over again, they become perfectly gigantic, and when cast upward, or forward, or backward, fall in a very shower of spray. And still the snow flakes fall, and still the cold sharp frost continues. What, if we make a man of snow, a man of snow flakes; cold to be sure, but not perhaps colder, on the whole, than living men about us in their heart of hearts. So we set to work. Upward, upward, with the snow flakes, higher and higher with the snow-balls, and by-and-bye a huge gigantic figure, all of snow, is rising upward, with a wonderful head, with a basket for a hat, and a broom for an arm. Surely, it is worth the trouble,—a wintry Colossus, a Brobdingnagian snow mountain; the finishing touch is given,

and a shout—a shout such as merry light-hearted boys can alone raise—is echoed far and wide.

M. Girardet has sketched such a scene. The thick white snow is resting upon all things, soft and white as down. Notice the busy happy group at play. Here a schoolboy is half concealed by the snow; his books lie on the ground, for what to him are books when men of snow are making? By him stands another, hiding his chilly hands within his own warm pockets; his head is carefully bandaged, and seems to tell us that he should be somewhere else, somewhere by the blazing fire, rather than in the open air on such a sharp cold day as this. But what are all the tooth-aches in the world to him when a frolic is afoot among the snow? Here, at the front, another lad is rolling onward a ponderous snow-ball; there one without a cap, and with a careless air, that seems to bid defiance to the weather, is asking some question about the sport. Here a sturdy boy is supporting another on his shoulder, that the other with a broken branch may artistically finish the optics of the man of snow. And here's another lifting up his hands in admiration; and here another taking a full view of the performance, forming a calm impartial judgment of the whole; and there behind a very host of boys, whooping and hallooing with delight.

The chalet is covered with snow, and very cold and chilly does it look: a mother and a little child or two look forth upon the scene; and there the sturdy mountaineer stops to glance for a moment on the man of snow, and lives again his boyish life in the joy and pleasure of the young ones.

Who among us, at some time or another, has not joined in such sport? not in Alpine villages, but in a town or village somewhere? We can recall those boyish days, and forget the past in the present—forget the stern, hard struggle of life, the journey that knows no halting place, the wearisome school time that knows no holiday, the battle that never ceases, the siege that knows no truce—and for the time live again, as we once lived twenty, thirty, forty years ago. The sketch wakes up old memories deep and tender,—we have made snow men in our time: we have piled up ball upon ball, and flake upon flake, and mound upon mound, and fashioned out a cold pattern of humanity. It was a pleasant thing to wander in that shady lane when blackberries and filberts ripen, pleasant to frolic in the green fields when lazy kine were blinking in the sunshine, and when the strip of gossamer sauntered about in the golden air; but not so pleasant as the frost, the cold, sharp frost, the cheerful, healthful frost—a benison be on it! We remember how the old churchyard, covered o'er with snow, appeared more still and solemn than at any other time; how icicles, in wondrous forms, depending from every eave and gable; how bleak and bare were the trees, and how the boisterous bellowing wind played its own wild music. Thinking of these things, we see again old faces, hear again old voices—faces that have long departed, voices that have long been hushed.

Well, all of those merry, light-hearted boys that live to be men, will play the same game over again in the activities of their world-life. Depend upon it they will work away at speculation and wise schemes that shall have no more durability than the man of snow, that after all shall fade away and vanish as their childish work. But what of it, when the thaw comes and melts their mountain, they will fall asleep and forget it, and wake to greet new pleasures in another season; and he is happy who can carry with him into the world the same cheerful and contented spirit,—who is never crushed and beaten down by the strife, and trials, and failures of life.

In both Girardet's sketches there is so much of truth, so much of reality, so much of life, that they show us the artist has thrown his whole soul into the designs. Here Jocko, in his dusty red jacket, attracts around him a throng of admirers—Jocko, who has seen the world; here old winter is reigning, and the Alpine village is noisy with the boyish sport, as busy hands pile high the mighty man of snow. The sketches are life-like and worthy of the artist.